

How can a school psychologist help?

School psychologists are trained in child development, learning, and behavior. They work with teachers, parents, and children to help students succeed. For more information about school psychologists' services or retention, contact your local school psychologist, or:



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

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Should My Child Repeat a Grade?

- Why are children held back?
- Can retention help?
- Can retention do any harm?
- What can I do to help my child?
- How can a school psychologist help?
- What special help is available?



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Why are children held back?

Although most children are promoted to the next grade each year, schools might recommend retention for several reasons:

Poor reading or math skills

"Jason is behind in reading. He isn't ready for the next grade."

Immaturity

"Emily is one of the youngest children in the class. She needs more time to grow up."

Frequent moves or absences

"Sarah missed so much school this year. She needs a chance to learn."

Limited English skills

"Elena doesn't speak enough English yet. She needs more time."

Failing standards tests

"Matthew failed the 5th grade reading test. He has to pass to be promoted."

Can retention help?

Although many children are retained each year, research shows that most do not "catch up" when they are held back, or they fall behind again in later grades. "Transition Kindergarten" is a form of retention no more effective than retention in kindergarten or first grade.

Retention more likely will help children who:

- Missed a lot of school due to illness or family moves—if the attendance problem is solved and the child is only one year older than classmates.
- Feel good about themselves, get along well with others and are not very far behind.
- Receive well-designed, individualized instruction rather than a repeat of the same instruction.

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Promoting a healthy educational and psychological environment for all children and youth.

## Can retention do any harm?

Some students are retained more often than others. Male, Black, Hispanic, and poor children are most likely to be held back. Research also shows that, compared to children who are promoted, children who are retained are more likely to:

- Have poor academic skills, particularly in reading
- Get into trouble, dislike school, and feel badly about themselves
- Drop out of school before graduation, particularly if retained more than once
- Have health and emotional problems as adolescents, including substance abuse
- Experience difficulties as adults, including unemployment and incarceration

*Researchers say that, “Dropouts are five times more likely to have repeated a grade than are high school graduates. Students who repeat two grades have a probability of dropping out of nearly 100 percent.”*



## What can I do to help my child?

*Neither* retention nor promotion alone can help a child succeed in school. When children have difficulty learning, teachers need to try *different* ways to help them learn—not just repeat the same lessons that did not work the first time. There are effective alternatives to retention or promotion.

## Parents can help children succeed in school:

- Talk to your child’s teacher often about schoolwork. Parent involvement increases student success.
- Ask your child about homework. Help your child find a quiet time and place to study.
- Make sure your child goes to school every day, eats balanced meals, gets enough sleep and receives good medical care to stay healthy and alert.

- Let your child know you think school is very important!
- Find out what kinds of help are available for students who are struggling. Does your school use a testing program to decide who gets promoted? Does your school have a strong early reading program, mental health services or tutoring programs?

## What special help is available?

In addition to the teacher, these specialists can work with you to help your child succeed:

- School Psychologist
- School Student Service Team
- School Social Worker
- School Nurse
- Reading Specialist
- School Counselor

*Parents should always have a voice in the final decisions about retention. Ask questions and get answers! Your involvement will help you decide what is best for your child.*